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Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : Assistant Director for Operations

FROM : Acting Chief, Foreign Documents Branch

SUBJECT: Handling of Foreign Language Documents

DATE: 24 November 1948

1. Problem

To determine what procedures are necessary to effect the most efficient handling of foreign language documents in CIA.

2. Facts Bearing on the Problem

a. There must first be a clarification of the different types of handling accorded to foreign language documents by CIA. There are foreign language documents procured overtly and covertly. The latter are, under present arrangements, the exclusive property of OSO. However, FDB/OO does fit into the picture on these, in that it performs translations of some of these documents upon the specific request of OSO. When this is done the document and the manuscript translation are both returned directly to OSO. No title record or copy of these is maintained in FDB. What further dissemination such translations receive or the repository for such documents is not now known. Other SO documents receive a slightly different handling. In this case the documents are forwarded to ORE either on loan or for retention. ORE then may request FDB to make translations of such documents, ~~and disseminate them as regular OO reports.~~ The original document is then returned to ORE.

b. Secondly, there are what you may term semi-overt documents collected by Contacts Branch. These documents are, of course, varied in nature and received erratically. Some of these are forwarded to ORE for perusal. Others are forwarded to CIA Library with a covering report disseminated by Contacts Branch. Still others are sent to FDB for translation. On completion of translation the original document and the translation are returned to Contacts Branch for dissemination in report form.

c. Thirdly, we have overt foreign language documents which because of present handling procedures will be discussed in two groups, namely, those obtained through purchase, and those otherwise obtained.

(1) Under present arrangements all requests for purchase of documents must go through the CIA Library. Such requests come from ORE, OO, OSO and OCD. OCD coordinates the requests and endeavors to procure the item through the

FDB
coordination
+ OCD
purchase

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State Department (IAD), or by forwarding the request to Services Branch for procurement in the United States. Included in this are requests for purchase of individual books of intelligence value or for reference use and subscriptions to periodicals and newspapers.

(2) Overt foreign language documents not acquired through purchase are received and handled in various ways. It is believed the major portion of this material is received directly by FDB on loan or for retention. This material is received from all of the IAC agencies and from a number of non-IAC agencies. FDB coordinates the exploitation of this material to meet established intelligence requirements. Other material of this type, such as copies of enclosures to attache reports is received directly by OCD/CIA Library. This material has received a mixed handling. Some of it has been forwarded to ORE for evaluation. Some has been placed in library files. Some has been placed on library shelves. Some has been forwarded to FDB on short loan for return to CIA Library and a few items have been forwarded to FDB on indefinite loan.

*send to
FDB for eval.
(incl CB for
lang mat)*

3. Discussion

a. Now, it is obvious that in the handling of all this foreign language material linguists are needed in varying degrees. First, linguists are needed to record accurately the title, author, publisher and subject matter of the document. Secondly, linguists are needed to screen or scan in order to determine the intelligence value or to form an evaluation of the value of the document to intelligence. Thirdly, linguists are needed to extract pertinent and required information or to make translations of important documents. The important fact, therefore, in the handling of this material, is that linguists are needed.

b. It is perhaps trite to say that good linguists are far from plentiful, but, nevertheless, it is a fact. It is important then that a policy of conservation of linguist strength be followed and that linguists be used in the most efficient manner. There is a language factor which affects the degree of importance to be attached to this matter. There are many people who can handle a modicum of French or Spanish, and German and Italian to a lesser degree. There is a relatively small number of people, on the other hand, who can handle Slavic languages with any degree of proficiency. Of these, a majority will only handle Russian. There are still fewer who can handle the other European languages and the Far Eastern languages, and it is a recognized fact throughout the United States that the people who can handle with

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any proficiency whatsoever the Near Eastern or Middle Eastern languages are extremely scarce. Thus, any measures to be adopted for the conservation and efficient use of linguists must be effected, for maximum efficacy, in a sliding scale program in accordance with the general factors mentioned above. In the application of this point to the present problem we must first discount covert foreign language documents and corresponding linguists strength as a special problem. If we work out the application of the aforementioned sliding scale for linguists to the other documents, we could then say that documents in French, Spanish, German and Italian might be about as easily handled by one office as another, for the procurement of linguists who handle these languages would probably not seriously endanger the needs of any other office.

c. However, for all other languages, because of the scarcity of linguists, it becomes important that such linguists be centrally employed as far as possible. Among the linguists in this category there are at least three differing types of ability which will determine their employment. First, there is the linguists with aural ability who can hear and understand a foreign language readily but does not read it with ease. This ability is obviously of maximum use to the FBIB. Secondly, there is the linguist who has an extensive background and a professional specialty, whose knowledge of the foreign language is of secondary consideration and who can be best used as a consultant, researcher or analyst in ORE. Thirdly, there is the individual who has real linguistic visual ability in either one or more foreign languages and English. This type of individual is of utmost value to FDB.

d. Accordingly, aside from the linguists needed for the work in OSO, it would seem highly inadvisable that any further breakdown of linguist strength should be considered. Even at this time, due to the scarcity of linguists, close cooperation between FDB and ORE is required. It is believed that the same is the case for FBIB and ORE. There are virtually no cases of conflict on personnel between FBIB and FDB.

e. For the procurement of linguist personnel CIA must compete with the Civil Service Commission and nearly all other Federal agencies. Difficulties of procurement plus difficulties in clearance impress, even more, the utmost need for the efficient use of this type of personnel. How does this then apply to the handling of foreign language material?

f. We have already discounted OSO material. Accordingly, there remains so-termed semi-overt material and overt foreign language publications. Inasmuch as FBIB does not handle documentary material they can then be excluded from further

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discussion. The remaining breakdown of linguists is between ORE and FDB. However, as we indicated in Paragraph 2 above, CIA Library handles several types of foreign language documents. It is then obvious that the CIA Library will (1) require linguists to process this and to handle it properly, or, (2) if this is not done they will have to rely on linguist strength in some other branch to do this work for them, or, (3) let it go undone or not done properly. The latter course is, on the face of it, out of the question. The second course is in large part what CIA Library is endeavoring to do at the present time. If the decision is that the CIA Library should handle the foreign language material it receives properly then they must have qualified linguists in a number of languages. If this is done it will place CIA Library in competition primarily with FDB for linguist personnel. This would run contrary to a program of linguist conservation.

*Have
FDB list
litter*

g. Let us meanwhile consider the overall problems of handling foreign language material. Why does foreign language material come to the Agency, to what use is it put and why should it be retained if it is? Material in a foreign language, classified or unclassified, is a source for the Agency of information which will go to make up intelligence. From it is extracted the information needed for specific projects and basic or current intelligence. It may be scanned by an analyst for his own information, scanned by a document scanner for general or specific intelligence value, extracted, abstracted, translated, or listed, filed and cross-indexed. If exploited, it may then be filed archivally for possible future reference. If partially exploited, it may be held for further exploitation in the reasonably near future, filed archivally or otherwise disposed of. If there is no exploitation it may simply be listed, filed and cross-indexed. For the first two steps, full exploitation or partial exploitation, a document must normally be processed by FDB. Of those documents not exploited, some presently go to FDB, some to CIA Library. For these, there is at present no central scanning control to determine (1) whether the document should be retained by the Agency, or (2) whether the document should be exploited to meet outstanding requirements. For efficient handling of this type of material a control is necessary. For this type of control, linguists are needed. If the handling of foreign language material were viewed from this standpoint it would seem that FDB, which at present exercises this type of control over its own documents, would be most capable of handling all of the documents.

*Does to
FDB fresh
+ hold there
to be exploited
for 6 mos.
Pass others
to CIA lib.*

h. However, there are some other factors to consider. Let us take each type of foreign language document, other than covert, that is presently being handled by CIA Library and see what is involved. First, there are those documents sent to CIA

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Library with a covering report disseminated by Contacts Branch. To disseminate the report covering the document Contacts Branch must first either have obtained a translation from FDB, a translation with the document from the source, or a general idea of the document from the source. In the first two cases no further exploitation is necessary. In the third case, however, a more accurate determination of the value of the information therein may well be necessary. At the present time such a report calls for the attention of an analyst. He must scan it if he can read the language or request FDB to summarize or translate it for him. This method has some advantage in that the particular information contained in the document may not be required immediately and its temporary mission is fulfilled by the covering report and by filing. However, with the volume of material processed by the analyst the report and the document may be overlooked either because the analyst feels he has not time to read it, or cannot read it. If it is filed for future reference the cross-indexing, if not done by linguists, may be done incorrectly and a piece of valuable information lost perhaps forever. This points to at least accurate indexing of foreign language documents which must be done by linguists.

*Send to FDB
for
indexing & or
exploitation
& return to
library.*

i. Secondly, there is overt foreign language material received by CIA Library from various sources other than through purchase. This material definitely needs to be scanned so that its intelligence value may be determined and such of it that has value should at least be listed and indexed, if not exploited. Such listing and scanning aside from its exploitation again requires linguists plus a knowledge of intelligence requirements. As FDB is performing such a service on large quantities of foreign language material at the present time it seems only logical that it should do so for this material. CIA Library has already indicated that it believes also that this type of material should go to FDB and says it has taken steps to forward all such material in the future to FDB on ~~indefinite~~ loan.

*OK
to FDB for
exploitation
etc*

j. Thirdly, there are all the foreign language documents acquired through purchase. At present all requests for purchases of documents go through the CIA Library. This was established with the aim of coordinating all such requests and avoiding duplication, so that, if the document was already available in the Agency, needless purchases and expenditures could be avoided. This phase of it is good. There are, however, two or three phases which are not adequately taken into account. First, lacking linguists, the CIA Library cannot adequately handle requests for material in a script other than Roman. Further, it cannot accurately, therefore, determine whether the transliteration, if provided by the requestor, is accurate or not. Again it likewise cannot determine if the translation in English is accurate or whether there may not be two or three ways of correctly translating the title. Secondly,

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coordination with FDB is erratic, failing to take into account the vast volume of material held by FDB or available to it through its various sources. Thirdly, upon procurement of the actual material, lacking linguists again, the CIA Library cannot accurately determine if the material received is actually that requested.

k. The CIA Library is striving hard to do a good job with this material and has asked and received much help from FDB and ONE. However, for the job to be done properly, the CIA Library should have linguists or the requests should be processed through FDB. Further, if requests of this nature are processed by CIA Library they should all be coordinated with FDB. This completes the three categories of documents in question which are presently being handled by the CIA Library. On one category there is mutual agreement that FDB should handle. The other two categories are open to question at the present time. For each category the need for linguists is the crucial point.

*send requests
to FDB before
buying
and after
receiving
(for listing
if possible
otherwise to
requestor,
with listing
to OGD to
say who
got it -)*

4. Conclusions

It is concluded with reference to the problem that linguists form a crucial point in its solution and that the problem of handling non-covert foreign language material could be adequately solved in one of the following ways:

a. By providing the CIA Library with linguists so as to insure that the processing of foreign language material it receives is done properly. *no*

b. By splitting the process between FDB and CIA Library on a language basis whereby that material written in the most widely known languages, such as French and Spanish, could continue to be processed by the CIA Library with its present personnel while other foreign language material would be processed by FDB. *no*

c. By having FDB ^{list} process all the foreign language material for the CIA Library, ~~splitting~~ *OK*

d. By having FDB process all the foreign language material as an inherent function. *no*

5. Recommendations

It is recommended in reference to the problem that the simplest and most practicable solution is to have FDB process all non-covert foreign language material for the Agency as an inherent function. It is, therefore, requested that the attached draft agreement be *no*

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approved and that concurrence be obtained from OCD and A&M.

J. J. BAGNALL

Encl: Draft agreement

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